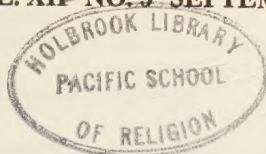


Pulpit

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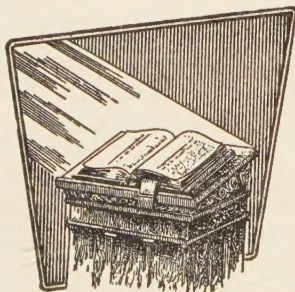
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WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey, The Federated Churches, Lewiston, Idaho

Do you suppose that the most serious heresy of our time is not glorification of sin but the acceptance of hopelessness as the fate of modern man, our retreat from God's kingdom, and our return to paganism?

Gerald Kennedy

The modern church offers to man an easy religion with very few moral absolutes. Too often the church negotiates a truce with its defects. When great social issues demand interpretation and confrontation, the church takes refuge in sacraments and liturgies. Seeking to save its own life, it may find that its life is threatened from within. Discrimination and unchristian practices are a part of the very life of the church of our day. Because of this the greatest need of the church is the renewal of its inner vitality lest it become a vestigial remnant of the society it meant to save. This renewal will require that the church manifest the power and the will to bridge the gulf between all classes in human society.

John Wesley Lord

While driving to Florida we were hailed by a young chap whose car was out of gas. We helped him, but my husband refused pay. "Just pass it on," he suggested.

Two days later our tire blew out—and our jack balked. Just then, the young man we had helped drove up; he had worked his way through school as a mechanic, and he changed our tire in a jiffy.

We then learned that he was a minister en route to his first charge in Pennsylvania—but detouring to Florida to get his bride. And we had supplied him with a perfect illustration for a "bread cast upon the waters" sermon text!

Forest A. DeBra in **Together**

These seven things I have tried: Laughing at difficulties, and found them disappearing. Attempting heavy responsibilities, and found them growing lighter. Facing a bad situation, and found it clearing up. Telling the truth, and found it the easiest way out. Doing an honest day's work, and found it the most rewarding. Believing men honest, and found them living up to expectation. Trusting God each day, and found Him surprising me with His goodness.

Nothing but the harmony of friendship soothes our sorrows; without its sympathy there is no happiness on earth.

(Continued on page 14)

Next month's themes will be "The Continuing Reformation" and "Overflowing Cups," sermons for Thanksgiving Day. The November topics will be "Anticipating Christmas in Advent" and "Drawn by a Star," Christmas sermons. December emphases will be "Your Option on a New Life" and "An Inventory of Our Needs."

Editors

CHARLES L. WALLIS
Keuka College Church
Keuka Park, N. Y.

CHARLES L. ALLEN
Grace Methodist Church
Atlanta, Georgia

E. PAUL HOVEY
The Federated Church
Lewiston, Idaho

Pulpit Preaching

Address sermon manuscripts and editorial correspondence to Rev. C. L. Wallis, Keuka College, Keuka Park, New York. Receipt will be acknowledged.

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EVERETT W. PALMER
GLENN E. HANNEMAN
GENE E. BARTLETT
CLARENCE J. FORSBERG
WESLEY P. FORD

COMMUNION MEDITATIONS

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

EVERETT W. PALMER, First Methodist Church, Glendale, California

"None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself"—Romans 14:7

"No man is an island; intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the Maine; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the lesse as well as if a promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

That incisive reminder by the Apostle Paul together with those famous lines from England's poet-preacher of the seventeenth century, John Donne, give the Christian answer to news reports on nuclear bomb testing, supersonic rockets, and now man-made satellites. What is more, they answer to the need of every home, marriage, church, community, business enterprise, and social organization; indeed, to the need of every heart.

The truth they declare is the key to our greatest blessings and our bitterest pain. When we heed it there is strength and joy, peace and fulfillment; life at its best. When we neglect it there is weakness and shame, strife, and ruin; life at its worst.

This is the truth which World-Wide Communion Sunday seeks to serve.

I

Consider the fact of our human inter-relatedness. Look at it, for example, in relation to our capacity for enjoyment.

Good music always is good music. But how much more completely it enters, cleanses, and exalts our being when we share the listening with a family circle or a few close friends.

A moonlit night along the Pacific is a wondrous thing. The waves come rolling in: sinuous, silver-edged, awesomely unceasing; creatures some-

times of singing grace and then of thunderous might. Beyond and above the waves is the full moon looking down upon you, benign as Buddha; its long, gleaming train linking sand to sky, man to mystery. Standing by are the stars, silent and reverent acolytes in the vast-domed cathedral of the night. Then if a tall line of palm trees stand in quiet dignity against the sky . . . It's a sight to see, but not alone.

Our capacity for the enjoyment of anything beautiful, wholesome and noble is measured largely by opportunity and ability to share it with others, especially those dearest. Solitariness makes even a moonlit night along the Pacific a thing of pain.

Or, to turn the coin on the other side, look at our human interdependence in relation to the ease with which others may hinder, hurt, and cripple us, even destroy us. Despite every safeguard provided by law and custom, and wise precaution, each of us is subject to constant risk of injury at the hands of others.

A father goes to work on Monday morning. His children depart for school. His wife proceeds to her household tasks and the care of their baby. They are secure in their confidence that he is a man who can be depended upon. They believe in his integrity and are proud to bear his

name. But before night he may be guilty of action which brings shame upon them worse than death. He may destroy their hopes and their happiness, blight their future, banish them to a wilderness of despair, impoverishment, and pain. This they suffer without opportunity for selfprotection because they are bound together in family ties. The misconduct of one thus involves them all in shame and injury.

A generation and more ago shortsighted, small-minded people in California raised a furor of agitation against the Asiatics, especially against Japanese. The Japanese at no time numbered more than two per cent of the population. They were quiet, industrious, exemplary in conduct. Yet the jingoists promoted various types of discriminatory and punitive legislation designed to humiliate, harass, and drive out the Japanese. This mistreatment of a Japanese minority fed the flames to resentment, bitterness, and anti-Americanism in Japan during the fateful years between World War I and II. It undermined the efforts of liberal, nonmilitarist leaders in Japan who tried desperately to direct their nation in a course of friendship and peace. It aided the war-party in their ruthless struggle for power. It helped trigger the bombs that fell on Pearl Harbor. So the bigotry and selfishness of a blatant few in California were a major factor in bringing loneliness, anguish, torment, and death to millions.

We are all tied together in one bundle of life. Our togetherness makes possible our deepest joys and our worst misery. "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself." "No man is an island."

II

See now how World-Wide Communion Sunday can help us make of our togetherness not a menace and a means of misery but a means of blessing and a promise of fulfillment.

Here we learn humility which

makes us brothers. We look upon the pure life of Jesus Christ and know the truth about ourselves. We know we are sinners with no hope, save in God's grace. We know we are weaklings with no strength to rule ourselves, save in God's strength. Who can bare his soul to the probing light of Jesus Christ and not be moved to stand with the publican who beat his breast and cried, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Knowing our common plight as sinners, the barriers which foolish pride puts between us go down; the walls which deny and destroy our humanity collapse. We learn humility which makes us want to be brothers.

Here we renew to Jesus Christ a loyalty which transcends all our differences to unite us in redemptive fellowship with people everywhere.

Among national leaders and high government officials of Western Germany whom we interviewed recently at Bonn were Baron Von Hahn, Minister of the Interior, and his wife. Christian leaders who have passed through the fires of great tribulation, they impressed us by their concern to lead the new Germany past concern for material prosperity to a religious awakening which will both cleanse the soul of Germany and make her a worthy member of the family of nations. Shortly after our return, Baroness Von Hahn wrote to encourage us. Among other things she said: "Let us try to bring the right freedom to our people, freedom to serve our Lord! And, above all, nothing will really be useful and helpful unless and until we are united in mind and heart, united above all differences of nationality, continents, creed. Before God we are all the same! That is a great comfort and a great challenge at the same time."

Loyalty to Jesus Christ makes possible the essential and imperative unity of mankind, which provides the solid foundations of understanding, compassion, and forgiveness which alone can make possible a world of

justice and of peace, homes of love and of happiness.

In the name of and for the sake of Jesus Christ we gather today with people all over the earth to commemorate World-Wide Communion Sunday. With Christians of every race and nationality on both sides of the Iron Curtain and of the Bamboo Curtain and in every part of the world, we remember that "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself," that no man and no

nation "is an island; intire of itself . . ." As we drink of the cup and eat of the broken bread we shall remember Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. In such remembrance may we be prompted to humility which makes us want to be brotherly, to a renewal of loyalty which makes possible the unity that heals our strife and sustains the world that ought to be, beginning in our own homes and hearts.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN—COMMUNION?"

GLENN E. HANNEMAN, First Baptist Church, Plainfield, New Jersey

As pressue built up from the opposition, and the course of events pointed clearly to the fact that his ministry must end on the cross, Jesus gathered his disciples together for one last supper.

As they were eating, he took bread and broke it and gave some to each with the words, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Then He took the cup, passed it among them, and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

There was prayer; they sang a hymn; then they moved out into a world which was to heap not only the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary on Jesus, but utter consternation and despair and persecution on his disciples.

They could not understand His crucifixion. They had not fully comprehended his teachings. Certainly they had not grasped the deep significance of the last supper together. And yet, in the days which followed the resurrection, days of persecution and ridicule and martyrdom, those words, "Do this in remembrance of me," provided the power by which they not only stood firm against the tides of opposition and evil, but moved out to transform the world in which each of them lived. What was

the source of their power? Does it have meaning for us?

I

In the first place we know that they found a renewal of spiritual strength through fellowship. Think what it must have meant to those early Christians . . . moving quietly and lovingly among their brethren sharing their faith. Do you think they moved without opposition; without ridicule? Not so. But they were strengthened by their fellowship. Certainly it was true of that tiny band huddling together in the catacombs of Rome when Nero would have made flaming torches of them all; when they learned of some of their number being thrown to the lions in the coliseum; when tiny cell groups met in private homes in Corinth, and Ephesus, and Galatia . . . Questions? Yes! Weakening at times? Yes, I'm sure! But always, strengthened anew when they had gathered in fellowship to worship and pray and sing, and to "do this in remembrance" of Christ.

Just as the bread which they have eaten together is made up of many particles gathered together in one loaf, so those who have partaken have been gathered together into the body of Christ, which is the church. How well Christ understood human nature. There will be trial; you will come to despair; the lure of tempta-

tion may be strong; you will need encouragement. Therefore, come together in fellowship and "Do this in remembrance of me."

II

Now it has not been simply the fellowship which has made possible this enlarging circle of faith down across the centuries. There has been a special quality about it. It has meant a fellowship of the redeemed.

Perhaps the greatest problem to confront the disciples at the outset of their venture was that of fear. We know well how they disappeared into the night when the soldiers swooped down on Jesus in Gethsemane. We remember with chagrin how they hovered on the fringes of the crown, and watched from afar when He was crucified; how they huddled in fear and despair in the house of a friend during the bleak hours following his death. But over against this is the fact that they came back! Peter! . . . to stand in the midst of the very people from whom he once had fled and to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. James, John, Matthew . . . all of them, quietly but persistently sharing their faith in the Master. Stephen . . . dying under the stones of persecutors . . . but with such glowing love and faith that even the zealous Saul could not withstand his witness.

It is the same kind of faith that enabled five young Frenchmen to go to the stake at Lyon, May 1553, singing hymns and speaking their creed for all to hear, and finally to be heard amidst the crackling of the flames to pray and then to shout to each other, "Courage brother, courage."

How do you account for such fearlessness and understanding of life? I'll tell you! Because Christ has risen from the dead. There is no other explanation for the courage of Peter and Stephen, and all others who have followed—than that in Christ's resurrection, men have eternal evidence that God's will shall be done, and they need not fear whatever the world may bring. No power of the world

can long withstand such a redeeming faith.

The disciples were freed from fear. Moreover, they were redeemed from the bondage of sin. In Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables," there is a scene where Jean Valjean is brought back to the bishop's house by the police, carrying on his person the silver which he had stolen the night before. To the consternation of every one present, the bishop presented the candlesticks as well to the thief, dismissed the police, and turned to other business. When Valjean stood, as though dazed and uncomprehending, holding the candlesticks rather mechanically in his hands, the bishop drew near to him, and said, "Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I buy from you; I withdraw it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God." That act of love transformed the life of Jean Valjean. But how much more, the love of Christ who gave his life—poured out for the forgiveness of sins?

Certainly the disciples could not continue running away. They were brought face to face with the fact that their past mistakes no longer counted if they were sincere about trying to do better. The price was paid; their sins forgiven? Do you understand their joy? All the burdens and chains that bound them fell away! And they were free in a way they had never known before! That is the quality of the Christian fellowship of which no other gathering can boast! . . . Redeemed from fear and the sins that shackle us to go forth anew and serve! With what joy we can hear Christ's words today—"Do this in remembrance of me."

III

But even this is not all the story, for it has not been simply the fellowship of the redeemed which has reached down across the centuries to clasp hands with us. It has been the fellowship of the redeemed with

Christ. Now whether you are a Christian believer or not, I think you will have to admit that there is a mystery about a fellowship which could survive and ultimately conquer such a world as that in which the Christian faith was born. Yet here has been a fellowship—starting from the tiny band of eleven—meeting together and going out to serve their Lord with an abandon and love and devotion for which there is no complete rationale.

For centuries attempts have been made to understand what happens at communion. By the middle ages, one theory, called “transubstantiation” was widely accepted.

Martin Luther sought to add to this doctrine in what came to be known as “Consubstantiation.”

Zwingli, however, was repelled by the thought that religious wonders could be accomplished by physical bodies . . . and others, following his example, have regarded the bread and the cup as no more than symbols, visible emblems of an invisible reality. This is closest to the historic Baptist tradition—the symbols which evoke the devotion, by remembering what Christ is and has done.

But whatever the approach or understanding, this much is clear; that something happened to those dis-

ciples. Suddenly everything they had learned in the three years of their fellowship with Christ took on meaning! “He that loses his life for my sake shall find it.” “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be also.” “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . . and lo I am with you always, even unto the close of the age.” When they gathered together—it was the peculiar joy and mysterious fact that they were not alone! That Christ had triumphed over the grave! That it was the fellowship of the redeemed with Christ. And filled with such a faith, they went forth to conquer in His name.

So it is today. Though social conditions have changed, basic spiritual needs have not. Men still need to feel that they belong, that someone cares. There are still fears to be overcome and sins to be forgiven. Christ’s words are the same “This is my body which is broken for you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

The symbols are here. Christ is here. With what joy and thanksgiving we can come to the table of our Lord, to take our place in the fellowship of the redeemed with Christ.

WHY WE REMEMBER CHRIST

GENE E. BARTLETT, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York

In that Upper Room with the hour of His death at hand and the full tide of His affection for His disciples filling his heart, Christ gave new meaning to an old observance. He turned the Passover meal to a time of remembrance to be cherished, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

As Dr. Goodspeed has put it, “Where other men would write a will or a final address, He performed an act and charged them with its perpetuation. No wonder it still moves countless hearts to tears.”

First, it is remembering Him that

calls us back from the trivial to the vital. This tendency toward the trivial is always with us. Perhaps a parable of it is seen in rivers out in Southern California. Great river beds which show the evidence of once having been filled from bank to bank have become mere rivulets without power or beauty. So it often happens in the realm of faith. Mighty streams of grace becoming tiny and trivial rivulets without power. How, then, shall the stream flow again? Where do you turn for refreshment and renewal? The answer is so simple and so tested

that we often overlook it. Men renew their faith by remembering Christ, by coming back to Him, by turning once more from all of the derivatives to the original, by leaving for a while the branches and coming back to the roots. What an anticipation of our need that He counseled men to remember Him! For in that remembering there was renewal and rebirth.

One of the contemporaries of Socrates is reported to have said, "When I listen to any other orator of the day I say to myself, He is a good speaker, and that is all. But when I listen to Socrates my soul is stirred, my eyes filled with tears, and I blush for the trivialities on which I spend my days."

I

Even more, remembering Christ has that kind of impact. The danger of the modern church, as I understand it, is precisely this, its faith and practice run off into trivialities. Recently I saw pictures of a religious ceremony in the Holy Land. It was a reproducing of the occasion when Christ washed the feet of His disciples. But how different it all was! A bishop descended from a golden throne, knelt momentarily to wash the feet of other priests, using the water from a golden bowl and the finest linen towel. And when it was all done you couldn't help feeling that the real vitality of Christ had been turned into a triviality. It had become form without substance. This is the ultimate tragedy of faith.

This may not be the peril of our kind of church, but we have our own. Our peril is that we shall have committees without a commitment. Or that we shall set aside an occasional hour of worship instead of setting aside ourselves that a new sovereignty may take over. How important it is that somehow we cut beneath all of the substitutes and the superficiality and come back to the one thing that is essential "Do this in remembrance of me." In that return to Christ is the only answer we know to the triviality that destroys

the vitality.

How would Christ test the vitality of a church? I was thinking the other day of a parable of this. How do you test the water system of a city? Of course, you will want to know about the quantity of the supply. But that isn't enough. You need to take a single glass of water and test it for its purity and its quality. Only thus can you really know about the water supply of a whole city. For the final test of it is what is in the single glass of water. So when Christ comes to take an accounting of His church, He may never even ask to see the statistical report for the year. It may be that He would sit down with a youth facing his life work to see whether that young person feels any claim upon him for his energies. He may sit beside a sufferer to see whether His comfort is there. He might sit on the boards of the church to listen to the standards of their judgment, what they consider to be important, what is the test of the success they seek. Only by this method shall He really know how vital His church is. And it is more than possible that He would call us back to a single counsel, "Do this in remembrance of me."

II

Equally, the second ministry of that memory is that it does draw us close to God. When all has been said, this was the essential mission of Jesus Christ; that people who have been apart from God are brought close to Him. This is to confess a mystery. We can only proclaim that this has been an experience of every generation. Christ has been the bridge between men and God. He has restored the broken relationship.

In all honesty, we have not taken as seriously as we should this experience of separation from God. This is what Jesus meant by the term "sin." It is so much deeper than most of us have made it. We have talked about sin as though it were the breaking of a rule or the violation of a law. But from everything Jesus told us about

God, it was something that reached much deeper into our lives. Sin is the breaking of a relationship. It is cutting ourselves off from Him.

To come to the real meaning of it you have to think of some other experiences which will illustrate it. One of those, for example, is in the realm of the marriage relationship. It is one thing to fall short of what you want a marriage to be; it is another thing quite willfully to be unfaithful to that relationship. Jesus made clear that the experience we call sin is an unfaithfulness in our relationship with God. It is not merely the falling short of what we ought to be. It is a fundamental denying of the love that belongs to God and God alone.

Or again, it is one thing to break the law of the land. That's bad enough! But it is an infinitely deeper tragedy to practice treason, to be disloyal, to accept another sovereignty over the rightful one.

So sin is not merely breaking the law of God! It is playing the part of treason. It is denying His sovereignty. It is proving disloyal. It is unfaithfulness.

If this be true, can you not see with me why Jesus took this whole experience of sin so seriously? Such unfaithfulness to God, the treason of the human heart, could lead only to death. That's why His whole ministry centered in bringing men back to faithfulness in their relationship, to the renunciation of their treason, to the restoration of the right relation with God. To remember Him as we do today is to discover for ourselves that what He meant to men then He means to us now. He closes this gap, heals the broken relationship until all life is changed because we have entered into life's deepest relationship with God.

Can remembering do that? A missionary friend of ours tell of days in China when she was virtually cut off from the outside world by the spread of the Communist regime. As long as she was able she worked on in her

hospital ministering until finally she was taken into custody and sent out of the country. But in relating the experience, she said one thing that she would always be grateful for—pages of Scripture which she had learned as a girl and which had been up to that time only familiar words became for her the very source of life and strength. She discovered that there is a wonderful wisdom in learning the Christian truths in advance of the time when you may need them most. She says that she could not have endured that experience if from the deep places of her life there had not come back with new meaning words like these, "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee. I will neither leave nor forsake thee." It was remembering these which gave her strength. What would we do if we could not remember Him in the hours when we seem defeated, separated, cut off?

To be sure it is a long way from the Upper Room to this by any geography, but in the things of the spirit it isn't far at all. Sometimes it is painful to remember Christ. When Peter remembered on the morning after his betrayal he wept bitterly. When Judas remembered he went out and hanged himself. But when the disciples, who had followed only from afar off, remembered they came back together. If the memory of Him can do these things, bring us from the trivial to the vital, draw us back to living relationship with God.

Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong

Or others, that we are not always strong,

That we are ever overborne with care,

That we should ever weak or heartless be,

Anxious or troubled?

He alone who had the right to make the request has said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

SOMEBODY STANDING BEHIND YOU

Clarence J. Forsberg, First Methodist Church, Eugene, Oregon

Late one evening, almost a year ago now, I was making calls at the hospital, and came to the room of one of our older members. She was a woman in her eighties, I would judge, who had been ill for several years. It was obvious that she could not live much longer. The combination of her illness, her age, and probably the necessary medication, had taken its toll. Her thinking was not always clear. This night she was unusually quiet, and I simply read some old, familiar verses of Scripture and offered a short prayer. Just as I finished my prayer she raised up and seemed to look right through me with piercing eyes. Then she asked, "Is there somebody standing behind you?"

The question startled me and impulsively I glanced over my shoulder, even though I knew that she and I were the only two persons in the room. Her mind was playing tricks on her, and I tried to reassure her before I left. However, as I drove away from the hospital the question began to haunt me. I don't know what she saw in her imagination, or if she even knew who I was or what I was doing. But the question remains, and I have had occasion to ask myself that question many times.

I put the same question to you. "Is there somebody standing behind you?"

I

Let me say first of all that even though you may not be aware of it, there are many persons who stand behind you.

Paul has a great phrase in the New Testament, "Seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses . . ." No one ever really lives his life in a vacuum. All of us are surrounded by a great host of unseen witnesses. We stand in the tradi-

tion of those who have gone before us.

Every doctor leaning over a sick-bed; every teacher standing before his class; every lawyer pleading his case; every preacher in his pulpit; every student in the lab; every mother holding a child in her arms; all of us are surrounded, whether we recognize it or not, by an unseen and a silent cloud of witnesses.

I do not intend this to sound eerie and frightening. Paul thought that it ought to do something for our morale to be aware of it. He wrote, "Seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us." The late Red Sanders is credited with the quotation: "In football, the essence of offense is blocking, and the essence of defense is tackling, but the quintessence of the game is spirit!" Well, the quintessence of greatness in any field of endeavor is always spirit. That is why we need to be reminded often of the tradition in which we stand, and of that unseen cloud of witnesses that surrounds us.

II

But there is another answer to the question with which we started, and that is that there is one particular Person who stands behind us.

He lived 2,000 years ago, and gathered around him a small band of faithful followers. On the eve of his death he shared a special meal with them. It was a ritualistic meal that had significance in their own Jewish tradition. But he gave it new meaning when he said, "As oft as ye do this, do it in remembrance of me." After he had died, his followers testified that they still felt his presence with them.

It is very easy to lose that sense of his presence. It can be lost on

the campus, as you become engrossed in studies, and activities, and the peculiar pressures of campus life. You can lose it as you go about your daily work, caught up in the responsibilities, the deadlines, and the pressures that go with that job. It can be lost all too easily in the home, under the hectic and often trying experiences of family living. It is easy to lose the sense of His presence.

But it is important to remember that what you have lost is only the sense of His presence, not the presence itself.

Strangely enough, it is easier to lose the sense of His presence than it is to evade it. Sometimes we try deliberately to put His demands upon us out of our thinking; but the harder we try, the more insistent they become. Francis Thompson described this in his well known lines from "The Hound of Heaven."

I fled Him down the nights
and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches

of the years;

I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears

From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—

"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me!"

That is a strange thing, but true.
The sense of His presence is easy to lose, but difficult to evade.

AT THE KING'S TABLE

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

Some have difficulty with a right attitude toward the person who seems more capable. If Joe gets good grades and I get poor grades, I may not like Joe. Sometimes one reacts by gossiping. Thus he seeks to bring the other down to his level. Or one becomes a cut-up to attract the attention that he does not get with poor grades.

This problem bothered King Saul. David was a young man with much ability. The women sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This saying displeased Saul and it would displease most of us. Saul, who could have been a good king, became jealous and wasted time trying to injure David. An interesting aside to Saul's jealousy is that his son Jonathan became David's closest friend. He warned David when his

father was angry. The depth of their friendship is indicated by this report: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The two made a covenant in which they exchanged robes and armor in a pledge of friendship.

With the passing years Saul's kingdom was weakened until finally the Philistines won a victory over Israel in which Saul and his three sons, including Jonathan, were killed. The king's jealousy had contributed to Israel's weakness.

David was made king and was very popular. He dealt justly with the people. Then he did a most unusual thing. He sent for a servant of the former king and asked, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kind-

ness for Jonathan's sake?" After he had become king he still remembered the kindness of Jonathan. This is a tribute to David. Sometimes when we get important jobs we are too busy to remember those in the past who have been kind to us. Also by an old custom a new king often destroyed any relatives of the former king lest they aspire to the throne.

The servant reported, "There is still a son of Jonathan. He is crippled in his feet." So David sent for Jonathan's son. When Mephibosheth, the cripple, came to the king's house, he was frightened. Anyone would be! He was the grandson of Saul. Maybe the king would want to put him to death. But immediately David said, "Do not fear for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan." So David established the youth in his own home. He asked that all his provisions be brought and from then on Mephibosheth ate at the king's table like one of the king's sons.

I

Now take a look at some interesting aspects of this story. First, the fact that the youth was crippled was not a factor with David. Many in those days would not have shown kindness to a crippled person. They would have assumed that he was being punished by God for either his own sins or those of his father. But David took him into his home no matter his physical condition.

The Bible reveals how he became a cripple. He was five years old and being cared for by a nurse when news came that Saul and Jonathan had been killed. The nurse assumed that the Philistines would also be after the family of Jonathan, so, with the child, she fled in haste. In their hurry the child fell. The nurse may have dropped him, or maybe stumbled, but the accident injured both his feet and he remained a cripple for the rest of his life.

This was an unfortunate accident but it still happens that persons are sometimes crippled by those who

care for him. Not many get broken feet but some do get broken values. When a home entrusted with growing children drift into careless habits: disregard for law, disrespect for Sunday, or drinking, that home is destroying high values by which a lad must walk. Careless habits injure growing boys and girls. Thousands of children have been left crippled by the sins or carelessness of those who ought to be their guardians.

But we are glad that our kind of society has a place for everyone. Everyone can rise above his injuries or limited talents if he will. We may not all become top managers but by the make-up of God's world there is a place of honor and responsibility for everyone.

At one time David, with 600 men, started a long journey that ended in a battle against the enemy. Before they arrived at the battle scene 200 were exhausted. These stayed by the brook and looked after the baggage. When the battle was won and they were dividing the spoil, some said, "We will not have to divide with these who stayed behind." But David said, "As his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike." So it is in God's world. When one does his best he shares in the honor even if he has only one talent or if he is crippled.

Second, David's kindness to the crippled boy was inspired by the kindness of Jonathan, the boy's father. How fine it is to have a name that has been worn in the past with honor! When one says, "I knew your father," and is inspired therefore to be kind, then we know the rich heritage left by good parents. Our lives do live after us. We make decisions; we say and do things, and after we are dead these things are remembered, and they affect the lives of others.

And indeed we would all be poor if it were not for the kindness and the goodness of those in the past. There are bad examples that warp

young lives, but there are far more good examples that help and bless and strengthen. "I will show you kindness for I remember your father." That will happen to most of us!

And third, note a second source of David's kindness. He was inspired by what he remembered of Jonathan but also by what he knew about God. "I will show the kindness of God." David knew that the Lord was good and that God's kindness must be expressed through others. We are good because we have learned from others, but also because we have learned of the goodness of God. No one can measure the kindness of God, not even in relation to his own life. And God's kindness must be expressed through us if it reaches others.

II

In this insight of David we understand better the life of Jesus. Jesus went about doing good because the whole purpose of his life was to share the kindness of God. Men had learned to love their friends and hate their enemies, but Jesus said, "Love your enemies, too." Why did he say that? Because it is the way of the kindness of God. Why did Jesus say forgive until seventy times seven times? Because that is the way of the kindness of God.

To speak of Jesus as impractical or unrealistic is to acknowledge that we do not understand the kindness of God. On the night of the betrayal Judas identified Jesus, and the soldiers moved in to take him. The disciples jumped to his rescue. One of them swung his sword and cut off the ear of a slave. The slave was there to help in the arrest. Jesus said, "No more of this," and he leaned over, touched the man's ear and healed him. By our modern standards it seems silly to pause to heal one who has come to destroy us. But if that seems silly, it is only because we have not yet discovered the depth of the kindness of God. David said, "I will show him the kindness of God." That is a big order but it is the real purpose of your life and mine.

So we note finally that because of the kindness of Jonathan and the kindness of God, Mephibosheth, the crippled grandson of David's rival was not left an outcast but instead was brought into the palace where he ate at the king's table. Surely at the king's table he had the very best; no longer the wings and necks—now the drumsticks!

But more important for the cripple than good food was the security of the king's table. In the east of the old world, if one being pursued by enemies could arrive at a place of refuge, called asylum, then his enemies could not harm him. The king's house was such a place. That was sacred ground and enemies could not enter.

This story of the cripple at the king's table throws a shaft of light upon one of the verses in the familiar 23rd Psalm: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." The enemies could stand outside and look in but they could not enter. So let the enemies come. My table is spread, my cup runneth over. This is the king's house. This is the king's table. No one can touch me here. Such was the security of the guest of the king.

We cannot all go to the king's table, but with the use of a little time and reverence, we can invite the King to our table. In our own homes we can pause to say, "Be present at our table, Lord." God does come to be with us. And when He is present we too know the security of the King's table. Nothing then can harm us!

And we can also share the bounty of our table as King David did. Many in the past have been kind and gracious and good to make our lives what they are. We can never measure their kindness or the kindness of God. But we can express gratitude for their kindness and we can share the kindness of God by giving generously of what we have to help those less fortunate.

And so we leave our story. Because Jonathan was kind to David, and because David knew the kindness of God, he, in turn, was kind to Mephibosheth. Each of us enters the same circle in his own day. To show kind-

ness, to show love, to express honesty and truth will provide the blessings of kindness for others and will bring to each of us the security of those who are privileged to be at the King's table.

WORTH QUOTING

from page 2

To keep full of enthusiasm, as God intended you to be, you have to keep your intake of energy greater than your outgo of energy, because the seeping away of energy draws enthusiasm off. If you are always strained, if you are anxious and you do not let go of your anxiety, the constant tension depletes you so that your energy evaporates and with it your enthusiasm. Therefore, they who wait upon the Lord discover the great technique of being able to let go and let God. They pray and ask God for wisdom and guidance, and then they give their tasks the best of themselves and, having done their best, they rest the outcome in the hands of the Lord, trusting in His providence, and so find renewal, new energy, new enthusiasm.

Norman Vincent Peale

A minister friend whom I like personally very much and who pains me when he preaches is a fellow who likes to yell. He has never mastered the art of speaking quietly. For emphasis he lets loose a lot of noise. Even when he speaks to a group in a private home he shouts at his hearers. He never learned the lesson learned by a noted clergyman. The Wall Street Journal says this clergyman was asked by a colleague why the loud, vehement preaching of his earlier days had given way to a more quiet persuasive manner of speech. The man laughed. "When I was young," he said, "I thought it was thunder that killed people, but when I grew up I discovered it was lightning. So I determined that in the future I would thunder less and lighten more."

Thomas Dreier in *Your Life*

The greatest thing any living soul can do is to see something clearly and tell it plainly.

John Ruskin

* * *

Communication

No longer is the long road long

No longer is the song

Or speech of other lands

An unheard call,

For space has dwindled with its pall
of gloom

And now the world's become a tiny
room

Wherein the outstretch hands

Can touch each wall.

John Van Brakle

* * *

High standards of living . . . protection from war . . . democratic government may have developed a complacency which is not adequate for a world crisis.

Erika Weibel

* * *

Brotherhood is not just a Bible word. Out of comradeship can come and will come the happy life for all. The underdog can and will lick his weight in the wildcats of the world.

Heywood Broun

* * *

If we think of life as a journey and consider it to be the opportunity for getting from where we are to where we want to be, we will have a working rule that provides us with both a purpose and expanding possibilities for our lives.

Fred P. Corson

* * *

The severest trial may bring you the greatest victory and the brightest crown.

Walter E. Isenhour

PHILLIPS PACKER ELLIOTT
CHARLES F. JACOBS
FRIEDRICH REST
AARON N. MECKEL
J. R. BROKHOFF

EMBOLDENED
BY HIS NAME

THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Phillips Packer Elliott, First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York

"That therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak."

Ephesians 6:20

Our text is from a man who is in prison in Rome. He is writing to the friends in Ephesus among whom he had labored. He asks them to pray for him, and not only in general but very specifically, "that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." He does not want to fail in his task, to become weak and timid as an apostle.

This does not mean that he will lack courage, although of course no man is sure of himself until the testing comes. But Paul's courage had been tried and not found wanting. He had faced opponents of all kinds, both on the streets and in the synagogues, he had been brought before various magistrates, he had been shipwrecked on his way to Rome—all these things and many more had happened, and his courage had never faltered. What he was afraid of was that he might lack confidence in his capacity to carry on his task, to present the gospel as it should be presented, to hold fast to his faith. He was not completely sure of himself, and he wanted to be given the "boldness" which we know as self-confidence, that he might continue to speak as he ought to speak.

To achieve confidence is one of the great problems of every life. The child of eighteen months will begin his erratic course around the room, falling, rising, holding on, letting go, gradually getting confidence enough to walk. The body, long ago, was ready to do its part, the legs are strong enough to hold. The only thing needful is the strength within, the willingness to let go. One sees men

who, as we say, have "everything," who are attractive, able, highly trained, and yet whose lives dwindle away. The reason is because with all their gifts they lack confidence, and cannot speak or act boldly as they ought. I can still remember a scene of years ago, where a man strong and vigorous physically, lay upon a sofa begging those around him to help get him out of a situation into which he had come, and a responsibility which he had assumed. He was quite competent to handle it, but it took two long months before his confidence returned and he was able to face this and other problems with poise and ability. Life must have confidence in itself or it is no longer life.

We are saying that our Christian faith gives us confidence. This has been true of faith always. The Psalms give that assurance. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty." "Though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident." Again and again this note of assurance is given. We go to these passages when our faith is weak. Yet we wonder why they have not helped us more. These are glorious and uplifting affirmations, and we believe them to be true, yet we read them and repeat them and remain timid still. They say the right things, but they fail to touch us in the deep places where the weakness or the strength of our life is determined.

It was this added touch which Jesus gave. Men had been told that they

must believe in themselves, but they never did so fully until they found how much He believed in them. In His confidence, their timidity began to fade away. If He thought this much of them, must they not think it of themselves? The Church has been built by those who had confidence in what they were doing, who in every generation were able, as Paul desired to be, to speak boldly about the faith that was in them and about the Master Whom they served.

I

We ask, then, how will our Christian faith give us confidence. In the first place, it tells us that we have a right to be here. This is where we belong, this is our home. Whenever man feels there is any doubt about his right to be where he is, he loses confidence. If there is uncertainty about the title to his house, to his farm, to his position, to his place in the community, his confidence is shaken.

We all know this feeling. It lies at the root of our race problem. Not only are there certain parts of our society where we may not feel at home, but there are times when we feel we are out of place anywhere. An architect has reminded us that in this city of stone and concrete, there is no place where one can sit down to rest between 42nd Street and Central Park, except the few benches around Radio City. It is as though the city were built to prevent people from feeling at home in it, having no business here unless they had some immediate errand to transact after which they should immediately depart. So many people feel that they do not really belong anywhere on earth, and as the Chronicler puts it, that they are "strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were." This does not seem to be my true home.

The temptation is to think that one can gain confidence by removing himself from this alien world. Sometimes people try to use religion to

do this. They sing "I'm but a stranger here, heaven is my home." They withdraw from the realities of this world in their contemplation of that realm which holds none of the hardships they experience here. Or they try to treat the world's life as unreal or incidental; its issues are not important, good and evil don't matter. They refuse to face life and take a stand. They think they can find confidence only if they desert the world of controversy and striving, and dwell in a realm of imagination or superficial activity. They feel that confidence can be found only if they leave the real world far behind.

Jesus gives men confidence by telling them that His teachings are for life, here and now. In this He is in the true tradition of His faith. God made the world of nature and of animals and then finally made man, and said to man that he was to "have dominion" over all the things that God had made. He was the one who was most at home. He was in fact the host to all of creation. He had been placed in charge. This was the place where he belonged.

So Christ made the world the place where men must find their life. There is no other area. There is no other arena for activity. The next world would come in due time, but it would come only after one had done his best here, had made this his home, and had lived as fully as possible upon this earth. Jesus spoke of life here and now, of the friends whom we must help, of the enemies whom we must forgive, of the character we must achieve, of the daily faith by which we are to live.

We belong, then, to our world and to our time. Each one has his equal place here with all the others. No more, but certainly no less. Each is entitled to his space upon the earth. He has a clear title to it. No one can say, to use Paul's familiar figure of the body, "I have no need of thee." And as though to show us that we belong here, Christ came to us

here upon earth. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, thus making us see our world in all its significance as never before. Jesus was completely at home here. He lived as One who knew His world and His day, and who knew them well. When told that His mother and brothers were seeking Him, He cast His arms over the whole crowd and said "These are my mother and my brethren." Thus completely did He feel that He belonged. Not even the growing hostility of those about Him could disturb His confidence. When people said, "Never man so spake", they said it because He spoke as one who knew life as they knew it, and who was fully at home as they were to be at home. We belong here. Christ persuades us of that. He says that He will be here with us, "always, even unto the end of the world."

II

In the second place, our Christian faith helps us earn our place in life. We are given the kind of confidence which comes through achievement. We are given a task to undertake, and in the doing of it, become more sure of ourselves.

There is a certain confidence which comes of being "to the manor born." Wherever one has come by naturally, whatever may be one's birthright, it is a source of satisfaction and of assurance. Yet it takes more than this to build true self-confidence. That comes only when one feels that he is earning his place, that it is his not just by the accident of birth but by the fact that he has worked for it. Some of the most insecure people we know are in positions which seem impressive, indestructible. But they did nothing to get there, they did not earn their place, and therefore they are essentially unsure.

So we must justify our position by our work. We are to do something for our day and generation. It can be a very simple act; even giving "a cup of cold water in my name" receives its reward. The reward is the

reward of the confidence which comes through doing something worthy.

This does not mean that simply repeated activity will bring confidence. We are apt to think that experience results in an assurance which nothing else can bring. But people do not always achieve confidence simply by the repetition of actions. The veteran actor is more apt to be afflicted with stage fright than the new star. Experience has given him less rather than more confidence. He knows, as the young man does not, the difference between mediocrity and excellence, and he cannot bear to do poorly a task which should be done so well. He is aware of how far short he is likely to fall. Yet beneath his uncertainty and this seeming lack of confidence there is the deeper achievement which gives his life the authority that we often see. For when the attempt is made to reach the highest and the best, confidence accompanies that attempt. Concentration on a worthy task, taking the place of all other concerns, steadies life and gives to it assurance. Although it may seem to be lacking on the surface, there is a confidence which is always present when the attempt is being made to do one's work well. The actor's confidence, for example, comes not because he has acted many times, but because he is trying to live up to his ideal of an actor. So with men and women in any worthy calling; their effort is what matters. So it is with the Christian life. Jesus said that men would find confidence in this way. He said that they would find their lives by losing them, that if they threw themselves into their tasks on behalf of truth or goodness or beauty, if they labored faithfully for men and for God, there would be no time or attention for uncertainty and timidity. They would find therein the confidence which they sought.

We have seen this taking place. It may crop up in unexpected areas but

when one finds dedication to a worthy task, one finds the secret of confidence. Wordsworth said, "The world is too much with us," and we know that that is true in the sense of its material temptations. But it is equally true to say, "The self is too much with us," and what one needs is to have more of the world, not in the "getting and spending" sense, but in its demand upon us to solve its problems and to ennoble its life. The world needs to be with us, to engage us, to demand our concentration on some of its worthy tasks.

Jesus gave men that. He showed them the priority. He would not let them turn away from it. "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." What they must do is to "seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness." Let this be first, and let your own life and worries come next. Great confidence will inevitably follow. Do the things that help to establish His Kingdom, be busy at them, concentrate upon them, and you will find the confidence which comes through having forgotten yourself in the tasks of the Kingdom.

III

Finally, our Christian faith gives us confidence of support. The reason that the Psalms, with all their great affirmations, do not remove uncertainty from us, is because people do not feel that they are making an intimate gift to their own lives. They are afraid that despite these promises, God will let them down; that at times of greatest need, He will not be present to help.

Christ makes us feel that support of God. We see it by His example, as He moves steadily to the Cross and

to the end. If any man would have had his confidence shaken, it would be He. But always He was sure that God was there, step by step, and to the very end. So we feel that same support. This does not mean that God endorses whatever we desire. Some people feel that God must help their plans or He is not supporting them. They say again and again, "God let me down." But God stood by you through all, His resources were never removed, His mercies never failed.

The great question of life is, "What does God want of the world and what does He want of me?" If I put it the other way and ask, "What do I want of God?" I will be forever dissatisfied and I will find Him always wanting. I will complain that He does not do what I want done, that I have no certainty of His support. When I am the center, I am always insecure. I have no foundation on which to rest except my own life and desire, and that is no foundation at all.

But when God is the center, then all His resources are mine. Then all I care about is that His purpose should be accomplished, and I can truly pray, "Thy will be done." Confidence always comes when the will of man is in accord with the will of God.

Our day is characterized by insecurity, among nations and in our own lives. We need confidence for our society and for ourselves. Our Christian faith brings it to us. It brings the confidence of belonging, the confidence of achievement, the confidence of God's support. Thus we are enabled, as Paul in his time, "To speak boldly as we ought to speak."

THE ART OF LIVING IN BETWEEN

CHARLES F. JACOBS, First Congregational Church, Waterloo, Iowa

But Peter continued knocking. Acts 12:16.

I want to begin this sermon with a human interest story which was made

the basis of an editorial in a recent issue of the **Christian Century** maga-

zine. Edward Madden, age 28, had climbed to the summit of George Washington bridge, ready to throw himself into the Hudson river 450 feet below. The efforts of the police and a hastily summoned priest could not dissuade him. What was behind this man's act of desperation? "Catherine, she's my wife, we've been separated a year. I have no place to live. I have no children. What do I have to live for?" A bystander, Homer K. Wright, who, though he was not sure that he had the answer, was no stranger to grief. He climbed up through the maze of steel to talk with this troubled man, person to person. Here is the gist of his pleading. "Look, Mister, I know what trouble is. My boy (seven) has had an open heart since he was a baby. He can't play with the other kids. He can't do what they do. Do you know what that means to a father? . . . I've thought of jumping off the bridge myself. And now I think we are going to save him. He's going to have an operation at the Mayo Clinic. Maybe it will work. Things get better. You must have hope." Homer Wright, a man familiar with trouble, had succeeded in doing what others could not do. He had communicated with a man in despair and caused him to turn back from death to life. The two of them climbed down the jungle of steel. Asked what he had done to change the situation, Mr. Wright replied: "I felt for the guy. He's got troubles. I've got it, too. But a man's got to stay with it."

In a few sharp sentences the editorial writer pinpoints the lesson of this poignant story. "No homiletics, no apologetics, no theodicy. Just a reminder from one man who knows to another man who had forgotten that humanity is never all or nothing at all, boom or bust, top of the world or bottom of the river. Life is all in the fearful, hoping sorrows, joys and maybes in between. A man's got to stay with it." In a very real sense this may be considered a parable of

life.

The editorial occasioned widespread comment. One person suggested to the editor that there be a follow-up under the caption—"the art of living in between." It is about this matter of living in between, of staying with it, that I want to consider.

I

For one thing, life has no easy solution. This world is no place for a cry baby. No matter how much we advance in technology there will always be problems that cannot be solved by push-button controls. God has ordained that each of us must live between the elemental polarities of the spirit—love and hate, tears and laughter, fear and hope, failure and success, doubt and despair. All the significant achievements of this life must be wrought within the limitations which God has imposed upon his creatures. Faced with an avalanche across our pathway, we must either tunnel beneath it or find a route over it. Hamlet is no stranger to us. Each of us must face the agonizing proposition:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them.

Saint Paul, writing to his Philippian friends, said: "I am hard pressed between the two." Life is forever pushing us into some personal Formosa straits. This is a permanent factor in human life. Each man must make his fearful voyage through a strait that leads between love and hate, hope and despair, life and death. In a sense this is the inescapable tyranny of life. Men have responded to their predicament in various ways. The stoic says that the best way is to enjoy what you can and to grin and bear the rest. Albert Camus,

French novelist and essayist, believing that death makes all our value systems meaningless, has answered with the concept of the Absurd. Faced with an Absurd universe, man may commit suicide or escape by way of a false door of hope. In the end, says this contemporary thinker, man can live in this house of horrors only as he develops the capacity of obstinate persistence. Though we may reject these interpretations of life, they do represent man's effort to face the task of living in between.

There is no denying that "life is all in the fearful, hoping sorrows, joys and maybes in between." But man was born for victory. He need not accept defeat. He can take this life, broken, incomplete as it is, and join it with God and make of it a thing of lasting beauty. This is the Christian response to the dreadful drama of life. To the brokenhearted, the fearful, the discouraged, Jesus continues to speak as he did to his own contemporaries: "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And he has left us with the wonderful promise that what he accomplished we, too, in part, can do. Faced with the hard realities of life, one need not become a pessimist or a fatalist. There is a more excellent way, a way which we must learn to follow; it is the way of staying with it or the art of living in between.

II

It is a well-attested fact of human experience that "the race is not always to the swift or the battle to the strong." The decisive factor in each man's life is his capacity to stay with it, to discern his way through the strait that leads between life and death, love and hate, fear and hope. Tucked away in the twelfth chapter of Acts is an interesting story which throws much light on how we ought to live. Herod had caused Peter to be imprisoned. The disciples had gathered to pray for his release. God delivered Peter and he went at once

to the house where many were praying. When he knocked at the door, Rhoda, the maid came to answer, but in her excitement over hearing Peter's voice she failed to open the door, but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. The disciples would not believe. Rhoda was undoubtedly mad. Peter was in jail. But Luke says, "Peter continued knocking." Eventually the door was opened and Peter went inside to tell how the Lord had delivered him.

Doors do open to souls who continue knocking, who have mastered the art of staying with it, though life may momentarily seem impossible. I think of the woman who, many years ago, came to tell me of her troubles. Life had gone all to pieces for her. Following a tragic accident in which her husband was killed she had been the victim of one sorrow after another. She had spent a year in a mental hospital and was now trying to recover her perspective and to become a useful citizen once more. The road she traveled was long and wound "up hill all the way." But she kept knocking at life's door; she mastered the art of living in between until at last she regained her perspective and has become a happy, creative person. You've got to continue knocking, though all life's doors seem closed to you.

Life can be extremely difficult. Some facts are unalterable. The mature person learns to accept the unalterable conditions which life has imposed upon him and to make of them such victory as is possible. Death, for example, comes to us all. When it visits our home we may lose ourselves in grief for a time, but eventually, if we are to live creatively, remorse and grief must give way to an acceptance of death as a part of God's plan for us. Sometimes life lays a crippling hand upon us and we may have to go through life under severe restrictions of body. To accept such limitations and to turn them into victories is our reasonable duty.

As a famous prayer reminds us, there are some things we can change and there are other things that we cannot change; maturity is knowing the difference between the alterable and the unalterable.

When Theodore Roosevelt was a child his body was frail. When he was eight years old his father said to him, "Son, God has given you a fine mind. You don't have to work for that. But your body is frail. You will have to decide what you are to do about that." With this understanding young Theodore started exercises, worked on a punching bag, and through his efforts changed a frail body into a great physique. He had mastered the art of staying with it. He continued knocking on doors closed to him until God, in his time, opened the door.

There is an inspiring scene in Ernest Hemingway's novel, "The Old Man and the Sea." Santiago, after 85 days on the sea, had brought his catch, a giant marlin to the harbor. But all that was left of the fish was the skeleton; shark, singly and in packs, had closed in and devoured his catch. But Santiago had mastered the art of staying with it. "A man can be destroyed," he said, "but not defeated."

Whatever your despair—sickness, loss of job, death, a broken home, a handicapped child—remember—you've got to stay with it! And who knows, after much knocking things may turn out right in the end. Life's doors that seem closed to you today may open for you under your persistent knock.

III

But let us apply this principle to the vast world in which we live. When we turn from our personal problems to the big world it is the same: "Life is all in the fearful, hoping sorrows, joys and maybes in between." There are no easy answers to the big problems which face our world.

We have the disadvantage of living in a world where the old landmarks and guide-posts have been expunged.

Pearl Buck, in an article in the Saturday Review, suggests it is as if, being valley dwellers, we had suddenly been tossed up on the mountain top never to return to our comfortable valley. Now we are faced with the urgency of adapting our lives to new and vaster horizons. An old world has died and a new age has been born. The problems of this new age stagger our imagination. Yet, we must in our international relationships master the art of living in the fearful straits which daily lead between life and death, love and hate, fear and hope.

There are giant problems facing our generation for which there is no immediate answer. As our delegate to the United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge, has so effectively pointed out there are big problems on the agenda to which there is no answer and to which there may be no answer for another ten years. But the nations dedicated to freedom cannot retreat; they cannot surrender to despair. We've got to stay with it, to continue knocking in the steadfast faith that eventually the doors will open and we shall pass through them into a better society. The possibility of a peaceful, federated world is an unarguable fact. When and how it will be achieved will be determined by our capacity to stay with it.

There are no easy answers to our difficulties, but it is too soon to despair. All the world is faced with seemingly insuperable problems. But we've got to keep knocking on every door that promises an answer; we've got to learn to live between success and failure in these big concerns.

IV

Do not let what I have said mislead you. I do not believe that we can do these things of our own power. It was Peter who stood at the door and continued knocking, but it was God who opened the door. As a minister who has often stood with people in trouble, I say without hesitation that when the victory comes it is of God. Religion has to do with

the invisible means of support. And until we have built up such resources we run the risk of being defeated by every wave of circumstance.

When Peter stood at the door knocking he was not alone; God was with him and he was unbeatable. Greatness is so frequently identified with adversity that we sometimes make the mistake of thinking that trouble is a good thing. But trouble can be tragically destructive. Take a walk down Skid-Row and see what adversity does to some people. But in the day of trouble God is often a very real help. When the prodigal had brought himself to the swine pen, then God took over. I have seen people confronted by situations that I have wondered how they could endure. But in the night there was a

gentle, healing power at work, and these broken hearted people have risen to heights of greatness. So Paul could say, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me," or in the language of a modern translation, "strengthened by God's spirit in the inward man."

We come back to where we started. Life is never "all one thing or all another, bottom of the river or top of the mountain." "Life is all in the fearful, hoping sorrows, joys and maybes in between." Whatever your despair, you've got to stay with it.

"But Peter continued knocking." And the good news is that God opened the door. What God did for Peter he will do for you if you've learned to stay with it.

TWO MEN STRUGGLING WITHIN ME

FRIEDRICH REST, St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Evansville, Indiana

Scripture: Romans 7:18-25

Modern man, we are reminded from time to time, has lost the sense of sin. In the colonial life of America, adults and even young children were morbidly interested in looking within themselves. The trend of recent years has been opposed to critical and frequent self-examination. Today we would think a child of twelve abnormal if he looked within himself so much that he developed a consciousness of sin bordering on despair. It is desirable that modern man becomes conscious of sin, and feels guilty of it, without becoming hysterical at the same time.

In order to become conscious of sin man must take time to look within himself. There is a general dislike of this sort of thing. Modern man rushes from one activity to another without taking time to think seriously of his own sin. But he needs to be alone from time to time if he would appreciate the depth of the Christian message. How can a man know the significance of redemption if he is not

even aware of the fact that he is a sinner? He must be realistic and honest when he looks at himself. It does no good for him to look at himself with rose-colored glasses. Let him be sincere in his introspection.

Let us look within ourselves to see the conflict between our consciences and our wills. It will be obvious that the plight in which we find ourselves is more critical than most of us suspect.

I

In describing the plight of man we do well to look minutely at the description Paul gives in the latter part of the seventh chapter of his letter to the Romans. The section begins with the words, "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh." This sounds strange to the modern ear. But let the truth of it be found in your moral experience. Man is evil.

Professor Reinhold Niebuhr calls attention to one of Mrs. Hermann's comparisons. Mrs. Hermann is an

Anglo-Catholic. She compares man to an onion. You peel off one layer of skin and there is another layer of skin. You peel off skins and skins of self only to find that it is still self, still man the sinner. Man is evil in the innermost parts.

The coming of the Son of God makes us see ourselves as we could not see without Him. Light reveals darkness. There are many people who never knew they were sinful until they saw the Son of God on the cross.

"I can will what is right, but I cannot do it." "To will is present" in us, but not to do. Saint Augustine said that when he wanted to move his hand it moved, but when he wanted to move his will it did not move. Many men since Paul and Augustine have wanted to follow Jesus with their whole hearts, but somehow they felt they could not move their wills to that end. The will "to do" is not present with us. Notice Saint Paul's explanation: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." Something pulls us back; something keeps us from doing what we would. A mysterious tendency throws us into reverse when we would go forward. We do that which we would not do. If we could only will to do good—and then do it! But our wills are not that easy to control. Our wills are stubborn. They will not move. As far as our own efforts are concerned, we are hopelessly bound, part and parcel, to the will which we cannot change. We must solve it, we feel, but we cannot. Sooner or later we come to this conclusion.

Paul uses a collective word which sums up this tendency to do wrong things and leave good things undone. "If I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me." He says it is sin which dwells in him that does the things he would not do. "The sin which performs and the self which disapproves the sin are in each of us. It is one man that wills and does

not perform; the same man that does not will and yet performs: within the four walls of the house of sin dwells but one man," writes Karl Barth.

Sin is a lack of faith, a lack of trust in God, a lack of love for God, an absence of peace and trust. To state it more positively, sin is disloyalty to God, rebellion against God, enmity against God. It is disruption; it is discord. The will which belongs to us sets itself up against God's will. "Sin is unbelief and disobedience in thought and desire, word and deed, whereby evil is done or good is neglected, whether thoughtlessly or willfully." Sins result from estrangement from God. Since we are sinners, rebels against God, we commit sins. Everything we do is colored by this lack of deep faith in God. We commit sins because our natures lack the true faith. We do some things we ought not to do and we omit doing things we ought to do.

There is a thread running through our actions which is not as noble as our actions appear. That thread is a result of sin. The prophet who said, "Man's goodness is as filthy rags," saw man's corruption even in his goodness, when this goodness is compared to the goodness of God. Sin is deathful. It is a disease which we cannot cure. We cannot eliminate it. We are rebellious. To overcome sin is as impossible as it is for us to overcome death. We know both to be facts against which we are powerless. Death will come no matter what we try to do by way of diets, sleep, and doctors' treatments. Sin will remain with us no matter what we do. We cannot work ourselves out of sin. It clings with leach-like tenacity.

II

Even Paul confesses the power of sin over him. "For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members." This law of sin is in the core of our very

being. It is in the center of our wills. It is in our members. With Paul we delight in the fact that there is yet a struggle and that we do not feel satisfied in resigning ourselves to the fact of sin. With the help of God we keep struggling to overcome as much of the law of sin as we can. Our dislike of our behaviour is a point of hope. It shows we are not under the complete domination of sin.

That the inward man is being sought by the law of God means there is pain, torment, anguish. Yet there is a note of joy that comes to us when we contemplate that we are alive and sensitive, to the work of God in our hearts.

Christianity breaks men into halves. The contradictory sides exist side by side in each of us.

In the Chicago Art Museum is a statue depicting two men struggling. One man, half reclining, seems straining to rise; the other, bending over him, is just as anxious to keep him down. At first glance it seems to be merely a sculptor's vision of two men wrestling. But on drawing nearer to the sinewy, vigorous muscles, the set of the limbs, the grim and irresistible determination on the fixed faces, it dawns upon us that here is not mere play, but a fight to the finish. On the pedestal below are the words of Victor Hugo, "I feel within me two men struggling." Here is the artists' conception of the inward struggle.

"I desire," says Thomas à Kempis in a confession to God, "to enjoy Thee inwardly, but I cannot take Thee. I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but fleshly things and unmortified passions depress me. I will in my mind be above all things, but in despite of myself I am constrained to be beneath, so I, unhappy man, fight with myself and am made grievous to myself while the spirit seeketh what is beneath. O what I suffer within while I think on heavenly things in my mind; the company of fleshly things cometh against me when I pray."

Saint Augustine summarizes the conflict the sculptor depicted in his way: "So these my two wills—the one old, the other new; the one carnal, the other spiritual—contended together, and by their discord disturbed my soul. . . . With what lashes of words did I not scourge my soul, that it might follow me, striving to go after thee. And it shrank back, it refused, though it had no excuse to offer."

The war is constant. The relentless, driving force of sin keeps gnawing against the law of our mind. This gnawing is so constant that the law of our mind, our thinking of what we ought to be and do, is alarmingly weakened. The law of sin is in our members, in our very being, even in our will. No wonder Paul writes, "Wretched man that I am!" Who would not be wretched when his will to love God and fellow men is being defeated? Tireless and aggressive, sin makes the inward man the servant. Disloyalty to God wins over the mind's loyalty to God. Lack of faith breaks through our faith. Lack of love overshadows our love for God. Love of one's self rises above love for God. A corrupt will crushes the will to obey God's will. The stubborn aspects of our bodies are victorious over the good and beautiful. The fact would well drive one into despair. Is it an isolated experience that Paul had when he said, "Wretched man that I am!"? The fact makes us tremble, but we dare not. We must keep the tension. Paul's statement does not refer to his life before he went on the road to Damascus. It is toward the end of his life that he writes. This contradiction is as real now as it was before his conversion. Paul kept the contradiction alive by fighting sin. He succeeded gloriously by combating sin continuously.

This contradiction, plight, crisis, or tension in each of us is not all wretchedness. There is a real joy in it! If this conflict did not exist in us, we might well be beyond hope. Either

we would be better than Paul, or we would be dead spiritually, if this tension did not exist. That there is yet a crisis within us indicates that God is still after the inmost self. Let us be thankful that there is yet a wretchedness. We will yet learn to say with Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

When we recognize this great gulf between us and God, when we feel most wretched, remember that we may be closer to God than we suspect! Then we realize the truth of our condition. Then we know that this struggle or conflict is too great for us. We look then for some power to lift us out of our misery. Our sin is not a reason why we should keep away from God, but the very reason why we should let Him come to us. He is to our soul what the physician is to our body. When our body is sick, we let the physician come to us. And so our hate of sin ought to be the reason why we let God come into our consciousness again. We are apparently defeated, but we want yet a victory. In our condition we ask a question similar to Paul's, "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" We need power with which to rise above our present condition. We need power from God.

III

Paul found his deliverer. He wrote, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" What tremendous significance these words have for us. We are saved from sin through Jesus Christ. We, who cannot overcome sin, are met by One outside the realm of sin. He came to us, crossing the gulf which existed between us and God, bearing the burden since we cannot cross to the other side. Being perfect, He suffered to come into an imperfect world; no, a sinful

world, a world so far gone it was almost contented to remain in sin. Being holy, He came into an unclean world. His coming was an overwhelming act of grace. He made Himself one with man. Not once did He yield to the power of sin in human life. Yet He was driven into death, and He hung there on the cross as if He were guilty and the people were innocent! But dying, He lived again. Buried, He rose from the dead. On earth for a time, He ascended into heaven. We cannot but see the grace of God in Him.

He lives! His power came into lives throughout the centuries of the Christian Church. He lives now even as before He came on earth. Power like that does not know limits. "Who shall deliver" us from the body of our spiritual death? Jesus Christ! He is greater than death. He can help us win over sin. He can restore our anchorage in God. He can initiate our faith in God. He can change our rebellion into submission to God's will. What we cannot do, He does for us! Thank God that our salvation from sin is through Jesus Christ. Here on earth we are raised, moment by moment, beyond ourselves. We shall find continuous saving power in Him. We shall be completely saved after death. Somehow I do not feel that we are at all capable of fully expressing how great, majestic, gracious, loving triumphant, and joyful this really is. Everything that had to happen happened in Christ.

From what depths of despair are we held. From what a bottomless pit are we lifted. From drifting like a derelict on the high seas, we are remade and re-anchored in God. We keep the conflict or tension through the strength of God. We are being saved from sin through Jesus Christ our Lord.

COME BEFORE WINTER

AARON N. MECKEL, First Congregational Church, St. Petersburg, Florida

Text: 2 Timothy 4:21

The modern visitor to Rome finds that in reality he visits three cities. There is, first of all, the city outside the ancient walls with its sprawling suburbs and its rising apartment houses, not unlike our booming Florida West Coast. Then, there is the city immediately within the walls, a bustling hub, radiating its manifold activities outwards to the periphery. But the city which every tourist wants most of all to see is the ancient inner city of Rome, with its Coliseum, its Forum and the Catacombs, plunging far back into the tides of history. Here the first Christians sang out their hallelujahs as they faced death. Here Cicero delivered his immortal orations, and the Christians met secretly to hold their service of praise to the risen Christ. And yonder, not far removed from the forum is the Mamertine prison where Paul the Apostle first spoke the words which comprise the text for this sermon.

It is late Fall when Paul delivers this valedictory of his to a young man named Timothy, whom he had led to the Lord. You will find the record of it in what, in our Bible, is the Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy," he writes, "when you come, bring along the cloak and the book, and above all, the parchments I left with Carpus at Troas." Then follows a word of deep tenderness and pathos: "If at all possible, do your best to come before winter."

Now, why did Paul use this expression, "Come before winter"? There is, of course, the climatic reason for his request. Once at Nice, in France, I looked out over the placid waters of the Mediterranean. It was summertime and little children and their parents were in bathing. But once winter arrives, the waters would be frozen over and travel would become difficult. Timothy would find

it hard to make his way to Paul in Rome from far away Ephesus.

And yet there is something deeper in this request, "Come before winter." The words sound a call to action—the challenge to a youth to make the most of his life while he can. Paul wants Timothy to take time by the forelock. Once winter comes, it would be too late. "Timothy," he is saying, "make the most of your life."

Suppose, then, that we think a little more deeply concerning this directive of Paul's.

I

First, we need to put it to work in the area of our human relationships. Quite surely Paul had this thought in mind. If, as someone has said, a friend is meant for trouble, then Timothy had better start off for Rome as soon as possible. Time would be of the essence. Read between the lines of this letter and here is what he seems to be saying: "The time of my departure is at hand. The axe of the executioner awaits. More than anything else I crave Christian companionship. If, therefore, you have any friendship to share, any love to give, then come before winter."

Let us suppose that Timothy had laid down this letter and satisfied himself with the thought that he would get to his friend by and by. There were so many of his affairs to be put in order first. The time comes eventually when he makes his way with much difficulty to Rome. He hastens to the prison, only to be told Paul is no longer there. He walks the streets of the city seeking someone who might tell him what had happened to his friend. One of the early Christians with whom he had struck up an acquaintance tells him that Paul has been led forth to martyrdom with the faithful Luke at

his side. Almost his last words were for Timothy. "Tell Timothy," Paul had said, "that I love him. Tell him to fulfill his ministry." That is all.

Perhaps I am speaking to someone today, harboring a hatred or resentment against another person, unwilling to speak the word of love, courage, or forgiveness, so urgently needed. Pray, do not be a fool. Winter comes so soon. Opportunity flits by — you may not have another chance.

I remember reading the story of a boy of fifteen years, who begged leave of heaven to re-visit the familiar scenes of earth where he had once lived. As he neared the old home, his father and mother hardly looked up. They were too busy for conversation. His former friends stared at him in silence. Then and there he became aware of the "deadness" of so many who still abide in this world. The upshot of the story, a kind of parable, was that we are only alive as we are sensitive and alert to the needs of others. We send our floral offerings to the funeral parlor rather than give them to the living. We wait until winter comes.

That is why the Apostle counsels this young friend, "If you have any love to show, any friendship to share, I need it now."

II

Again, the words are a summons to a life of Christian service. There is something needful God has for you to do. Then do it with dispatch. This is your day of grace.

Timothy is needed now to carry on the great missionary task. Paul is saying, "Remember our journey together; the churches we founded; the joy we found in witnessing for our Lord? That work must not fail now." Some of Paul's former colleagues have deserted. Demas, Crescens, Titus — all are gone. Only Dr. Luke remains. What is more, a stubborn opposition to the Christian cause has developed. Timothy, come now or never!

Time was when Paul would have been ashamed to ask for help. But

now he is chained to a Roman guard. Death is imminent. The snows of winter are on his head. The strong shoulders on which so much responsibility has rested are stooped with age. The young man is urgently needed. Would he come? Tradition has it that Timothy did come; that when the old warrior, Paul, was led to the martyr's block, Timothy was at his side. In fact, that Timothy gave his own life as a Christian martyr. Yes, Timothy came.

I wonder, will you come, if you haven't? Will you give of your strength, time, and means, while you may, that the glorious good news of the Gospel may be proclaimed? "The prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—Paul terms it.

When Hartley Coleridge, son of the famous poet, attended Oxford, he failed to make the most of his opportunity. He was sadly contented with mediocrity and failure. Years later he looked at the beautiful surroundings of Oxford and said: "To think that in such a place I lived such a life!"

I wonder if it will be said of someone here today, in time to come: "To think that in such an age, with the Kingdom of God at stake in the world — he lived such a life."

"Timothy," Paul is saying, "do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. Do it now."

III

But most of all, the challenge of Paul's words is for us to make a full and complete commitment of ourselves to Jesus Christ. We are to become Christian in the full sense of the word. More than anything else, the Apostle longs to fling the mantle of Christ's Lordship over Timothy.

What an example he himself is of a committed soul! There is soon to be a martyrdom and a crown. However, he has no regrets. "I know whom I have believed," he writes, "and that He is able to keep all I have committed unto Him against that day." Jesus Christ is a safe harbor for the storm-

driven soul. Timothy could trust in him for time and eternity.

Then come in the days of youth, ere the winter of doubt and the chill of the world's cynicism accost you. "Let Christ have your life," said D. L. Moody to the youth of his day. "He can do more with it than you can."

Indeed, come later; come in that period of life when responsibility weighs heavily and the heart sometimes sickens with discouragement. A man once told me how he had attended a religious meeting at which the challenge of Christian commitment was clearly sounded. He admitted feeling the urgency of it all, but held back. He would come at some later time—so he thought. But that time has never come. Never again has the inner voice spoken so authoritatively.

There is a tide in the affairs
of men

Which, taken at the flood,
leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their
life

Is bound in shallows and in
miseries.

Yes, come even later, when the

spring has gone out of the step and the years weigh heavily. Come when summer has melted into autumn, and autumn has given way to winter. On God's gracious calendar, it is never too late to come.

There was an old Rabbi once who would say to his people, "Repent the day before you die." "But, Rabbi," they would answer, "we know not the day of our death." "Very well then," he would say, "repent now."

Dr. John Short tells of a young factory worker named Jimmy. Every noon he would slip away for a little while and enter a little church nearby. There he would kneel for a few moments and come away with a shining countenance. An onlooker asked him, "Do you mind telling me what you say when you are at the altar?" "Ah!" he said, "it is all so simple. I just look up at Him and say, 'Jesus, it's Jimmy. That is all.' Not long afterwards, Jimmy lay on his last bed of illness. Those who were there said that a presence not of this world filled the room. What is more, that one whom Jimmy knew very intimately stood by his bed and said, 'Jimmy, it's Jesus.'"

"Come Before Winter," Come now.

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE RELIGIOUS

J. R. BROKHOFF, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte, N. C.

If any one thinks he is religious—James 1:26

"I'm not what you'd call a religious man." From time to time we hear someone say this. Though he may not think he is religious, he may be. It seems as though all of us are religious. A look at the statistics of world religions shows that practically the entire population is listed among various world religions. When Paul came to the intellectual capital of Greece, he noticed many altars and monuments to various gods, even an altar to an unknown god. When he began his speech he said, "O Athenians, I perceive that you are very religious. . . ." If Paul came to

America, he would most probably get the same impression. He could say, "O Americans, I perceive you are very religious. . . ."

But are we or do we just think we are religious? James raises this question: "If any one thinks he is religious . . ." They who think they are religious may not be at all. Those who think they are not religious may truly be most religious. To settle the problem, we must ask what it takes to be religious.

I

To be religious means to have the realization of great needs. One of

these needs felt by a religious man is the need for peace. In the light of the recent events, we are especially aware of the need of peace among the nations. That is not what we mean here. There is a peace that is more fundamental. It is peace of mind and soul in the individual.

The reason we do not have individual peace is due to the fact that we have a more fundamental need, the need for God. We are restless and frustrated because we do not have God. Augustine expressed it in a prayer, "Our souls are restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord." Without God, we feel that God is foreign to us. Our prayers are only words. We run and run and run, but we do not know where or why we are running.

A leading librarian of this state once told me that she was dying of cancer. I asked her what in an hour like that does a person really want and need. With utmost earnestness and sincerity she replied, "I want to see the face of Jesus." That indeed is man's basic need when the cards of life are put on the table. Recently a trailer truck brought a load of marble from Vermont to our new church. The pieces were to compose the crucifix. A crane was there to move the pieces off the truck, because they were very heavy. The marble was about 24 inches thick and one piece weighed ten tons. As I looked at the different pieces, I saw the feet of Jesus, his torso, his big hands with the nail prints, but I could not find his head. I asked the Superintendent whether they forgot to send the head. He informed me that it was still on the truck in a crate. We crawled on top the trailer. He tore the protective paper away, and we looked between the palings into the face of Jesus. That is what every person really needs. He needs above all to know God. When he looks into the face of Jesus, he sees the face of God.

II

Another need of a religious man is purity. All of us are like sheep that

have gone astray. We know we are sinners. Sin leaves us dirty. It is like puttering in the garden for a while. Your hands are not black but when we return to the house we feel they are dusty and gritty. We are not content until we have washed them.

That feeling of being unclean goes against our nature. We want to be clean. We know we were meant to be clean. As the body can become dirty, the soul can become spiritually unclean. This fundamental need to be pure is expressed by the Psalmist, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." The need for being spiritually clean drives us to Christ, our Saviour, who can cleanse us by his blood. Through him forgiveness can be secured. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven."

It is a need that must be fulfilled, for the sinner shall die in and because of his sin. "The wages of sin is death." Every man knows that when death comes he must give an account of himself to God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God when we are filthy with sin. There is a crying need for inner purity, and this need is felt by a religious man.

III

Another need is the need for power. It is a paradox that at a time when the outside world has more power than at any time in history, we should have the least amount of power for our individual lives.

Why do we need power for our personal lives? We need power to be the kind of person we ought to be. We want our lives to count for something worthwhile. We want to go places and do things to the glory of God and for the welfare of mankind. We want to be somebody some day. We have a character to build. Our lives are to be significant.

But what do we face? What are our actual experiences? We face temptations that we do not have the

power to turn down. We fail time after time. We are not able to match our lives with our ideals. It is like a lawyer who said about a client: "I know he knows what is right. When he comes to see me, he says he will do what is right. I believe he means it. But, it seems as though he does not have the will power to do it when the time comes." That can be said about every one of us. When the doing comes, we fail because we lack the power to do it. The religious man cries out for help. He needs strength to be the person God wants him to be.

To be a religious man it also takes the acceptance of a great salvation. Here are our needs. If we had them fulfilled, we would be saved from the consequences of not having them met.

From the beginning of the human race, man has turned to religion for salvation, to answer and fulfill these basic needs. That is what religion is for. That is its purpose: to save men, to answer their needs.

Various religions have different answers and means to give men salvation. One religion points to the laws of God. This is Judaism. It says that these laws are to be obeyed. If they are, we shall live. That is certainly true. If we obeyed all of God's laws, we would be well-pleasing and acceptable to God. The fallacy of this religion is that we do not and we cannot obey God's laws perfectly as God demands of us. If we cannot, then we are hopeless. This religion as a means of salvation is futile. As a code of ethics or a system of morality, it is acceptable, but that is not what man basically needs.

Another type of religion tries to answer the needs of men by offering salvation through sacrifices. The idea behind the sacrifices is that man can please and appease God by making great sacrifices. Thousands of sheep, goats, and bulls were offered on many bloody altars. Even human beings were offered to placate a supposedly angry God. The thought was that

when God saw the price paid to offer these sacrifices, He would see that man is loyal and loving. God then would not punish man with adverse conditions on earth and would accept him at death.

It may be easy for us now to see the futility of this method of salvation. This is man trying to appease God when God does not have to be appeased. Furthermore, God's favor cannot be bought or earned by what little or even man's best can be offered. There could be only one sacrifice that would be sufficient: not man's offering of animals or his own body, but God's own sacrifice of himself in Jesus.

A third type of religion is mysticism. This view of salvation is to lose ourselves in God by religious devotion and concentration. Buddhism and Hinduism follow this system of thought. To them life is basically evil, and the basis of life is desire. To get rid of life with all of its troubles is to get rid of desire by losing ourselves in contemplation of God. As a drop of water loses itself in the ocean, man is to identify himself by mysticism in God. Then he loses life and ceases to exist as an individual. This is the so-called blessed state of Nirvana, a perpetual peace of nothingness.

Is this what we want—an eternal nothingness? Do we not want to keep our individuality and personality? Do we not want to live as persons through eternity in fellowship with people and, above all, with Christ?

There is another religion that is different from all the rest. It is not man's religion. Man did not found it or organize it. It is God's religion. He founded it upon the prophets, Christ, and the Apostles. This is the Christian religion.

We all know the essence of this true religion. God came to do for man what he himself could not do for himself. God came in Christ. He took the form of a human being. He

lived, suffered, and died a cruel death on the cross. He rose in glory and ascended to the Father in heaven. On this cross God was in Christ reconciling the world. On Calvary's hill God overcame for man the perils of sin, Satan, and death. On the cross God wrought the magnificent work of salvation. There God took away the sins of the world.

IV

If this is true, why then do we not have this salvation as a personal possession? The answer is in faith. To be free from sin and to have our basic needs met, we must have faith. For a Christian faith means to believe that this Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the true Son of God. By faith we believe that Jesus' death on the cross took away the sin of the world. Faith enables us to accept the results of God's victory on the cross. By faith we appropriate the fruits of God's salvation. This makes faith much more than the popular belief that faith is intellectual assent to creeds. Faith means acceptance of Christ as Saviour. It means trusting in God to save us. This results in complete surrender and total commitment to Christ.

Here many religious people end their religion. They want to be hearers of the Word and not doers. They want the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, but do not want to get out and work for Christ. They are content with devotional exercises, but they do not want to exercise their faith in Christian living. Thus, a religious man is one who is activated by a great compulsion. He is driven from within to do good works and render service to mankind and to God.

This was the case with all truly religious people. Jeremiah did not want to preach God's Word. He confessed he just had to preach because it was like a fire shut up in his bones. Paul had the same feeling. He said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel . . . for the love of Christ compelleth me." The early Christians

could not stop preaching even when top authorities of Jerusalem commanded that they no longer teach or preach about Jesus. They told the magistrates, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." They went to the ends of the earth with their gospel. They were not paid to do it. They received no honor for it. They got only abuse, suffering, sacrifice, and even death. Why did they do it? They were activated by a great compulsion from within.

There are many people today who feel compelled to be religious. But their compulsion does not come from within but from without. They feel forced to be religious. One of the pressures is duty. They go to church and they give a little because they feel they should do it. They are children of God and that is their duty as children. They are parents and they have a duty to set the right example. They are members of the church and membership entails responsibility.

If religion is put on the basis of duty, there is no pleasure in it. Religion then is a bore; it is a wet-blanket. We perform religious acts because we cannot avoid them. We do not really want to do them, but we must. We are forced. Thus, we want to get our religious duties over with as fast as possible. We will keep tabs on our watches to see how long the sermon is and whether the service goes over the hour. We will come to church when we feel like it. Convenience is the most important factor in choosing a church. We want as little of church as we can get, just enough to say that we have done our duty. This is a miserable kind of religion. It would be better to have none than this.

Another external force moving us to be religious is fear of consequences. It is true: there are consequences of not being religious. Apart from God we shall sin. This brings sorrow and suffering. The ultimate price is death. With death comes hell. We

are terrified at the thought of spending eternity in hell. We want to avoid that by any means. This leads us to go to church and live a respectable life because we are afraid of eternal consequences.

Another type of force is the hope of reward. This appeals to our pride which, of course, is completely against true religion. The idea is that I am going to be good and do the right thing to my church because I want to get to heaven and share in all the rewards of heaven. When I die, I expect Peter to open the gates for me. Then I want Christ to say to me, "Well done, good servant. Enter into the joy of thy reward." I can see Paul carrying a crown with stars in it. He hands it to Jesus that he might place it on my head. Behind all of this is self-righteousness and self-effort. We want to say when we get to heaven, "Well, I made it!" In the light of this, no wonder one man suggested that all the joys of heaven should be burned up that people would love God for God's sake.

V

True religious people are impelled from within, not from without. What are these inner compelling forces? One is love for God. He is so loving and good to us that we cannot help but love Him. God is good. His blessings surround us. If we would let God love us, we would love him in return. We could not help it, for love begets love. God's love is really irresistible once we have experienced it. If we love God, then we will feel compelled from within to serve God. This love for God is not emotional, sentimental, or romantic. It is a practical love. Jesus stressed this when he said, "If ye love me, ye will obey my commandments." That is always true. If a man says he loves and does not

please the loved one, he does not really love. Love always seeks to please the lover by fulfilling his desires.

A Christian is impelled from within by a sense of gratitude. God gave him Christ. In Christ he has found forgiveness and life. He has the joy of salvation. He has been saved from the peril of his sins. He no longer fears death. What God has done for him is endless. Knowing and realizing this a Christian feels grateful. He is appreciative. Like a normal person, he asks, "What can I do for you? How can I ever repay you?" That is a natural response on the part of an appreciative person.

Out of this gratitude, a religious man says to God: "I'll go wherever you send me. I'll say what you want me to say. I'll do whatever you command. Your desire is my command. The most You ask of me is the least I can do." This makes service for God life's highest privilege. It is an honor to be in his service. All that is asked or expected of a religious person is done gladly, cheerfully, and willingly. He cannot help but do good works because he is activated by a great compulsion. He gladly goes to church. He volunteers his service.

You may think you are a religious person. Since you now know what it takes to be religious, you can decide whether you really are or just appear to be. If you are religious, it is not enough. In spite of popular opinion, one religion is not as good as another. It is not true that every religion will get you to the same place. The Bible teaches and the church preaches that there is but one true religion that can save a man. It is the religion of Jesus Christ. It is good to be a religious man. It is far better to be a Christian man.